# Southwest Companion Pass: Strategy, Earning, and In-Depth Guide

The Southwest Airlines Companion Pass is analyzed more extensively by travel rewards experts than any other airline companion benefit in the United States — because its potential value per earning period far exceeds any other companion program, and because the path to earning it through Chase Rapid Rewards credit card welcome bonuses has made it achievable for travelers who aren't Southwest frequent flyers. Call +1(888)217-6744 for Companion Pass assistance. This guide examines in depth the Companion Pass's unlimited model, the 135,000 CPQP earning threshold and every contributing source, the multi-card welcome bonus strategy, validity optimization, status interactions, and how the pass fundamentally changes the economics of paired Southwest travel.

**Southwest Companion Pass — 2026 Reference**

- Unlimited companion travel on every Southwest flight during pass validity
- Companion pays $5.60/one-way domestic flight in taxes — no base fare
- 135,000 CPQPs required in one calendar year (Jan 1–Dec 31)
- CPQPs reset to zero January 1 each year
- Chase Southwest Rapid Rewards credit cards: most efficient earning path
- Welcome bonus points count as CPQPs — 75K bonus = 55% of threshold
- Personal + Business Chase Southwest card = potentially 135K from welcome bonuses
- Pass valid from date earned through December 31 of following year
- January earning = up to 24 months of companion travel
- Companion: any person, changeable up to 3 times per calendar year
- Applies to paid fares AND Rapid Rewards award bookings
- No-change-fee applies to companion portions of Companion Pass bookings
- A-List Preferred: 2x flight CPQP earning (faster threshold crossing from flights)
- International Southwest (Mexico, Caribbean): companion pays international taxes
- Companion Pass assistance: +1(888)217-6744 or +1(855)321-3507

## THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR THE SOUTHWEST COMPANION PASS: VALUE AT SCALE

The Southwest Companion Pass's economic case is most compelling when analyzed over its full validity period and at realistic Southwest flying frequencies for regular users of the airline. Consider two comparative scenarios for a frequent Southwest flyer who takes 24 round trips (48 one-way flights) per year.

Scenario 1: Competitor annual certificate programs. Four competitors each provide one domestic round trip per year. If the primary traveler holds four different airline companion certificates and redeems each on a separate high-fare route at $400 average fares, the companion saves approximately $300 per certificate (after taxes) × 4 certificates = $1,200 per year in companion savings across four airlines. These four certificates require four different annual fee cards.

Scenario 2: Southwest Companion Pass on 24 round trips at $150 average Southwest fare. The companion joins all 24 round trips for $11.20 each in taxes. Companion savings: ($150 - $11.20) × 24 = $3,331 per year. From a single Southwest Rapid Rewards account. The Companion Pass's unlimited model at high flight frequency produces companion savings that dwarf what annual certificate programs can provide — not because Southwest's companion benefit is more generous per trip, but because it applies to every trip.

The scaling advantage reverses at low flight frequency: a traveler who takes only one Southwest round trip per year with a companion gets $138.80 in companion savings from the Companion Pass (one round trip at $150 fare minus $11.20 in taxes). A competitor taxes-only certificate on a $400 round trip saves the companion approximately $390. At very low Southwest flight frequency, a single high-fare competitor certificate can outperform the Companion Pass in total annual companion savings. The Companion Pass becomes superior at 3+ companion Southwest round trips per year.

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*Companion Pass vs. certificates by frequency: at 1 Southwest round trip/year, a $400 competitor certificate may produce more savings. At 3+ Southwest round trips/year with a companion, the Companion Pass's unlimited model surpasses any annual certificate program. At 24 round trips/year, the Companion Pass produces $3,300+ in annual companion savings vs. $300/year from a single certificate.*

## THE MULTI-CARD WELCOME BONUS STRATEGY FOR EFFICIENT THRESHOLD CROSSING

The most well-documented Companion Pass earning strategy involves applying for both a personal Chase Southwest credit card and a Chase Southwest business credit card —

where the applicant qualifies for both — and earning welcome bonuses on each card in the same calendar year. This strategy can cross the 135,000 CPQP threshold with minimal reliance on Southwest flight activity.

Practical mechanics: Chase Southwest personal cards (Plus, Premier, Priority) offer welcome bonuses to new cardholders who meet a spending threshold in the first few months. Chase Southwest business cards (Premier Business, Performance Business) offer welcome bonuses on a separate track. Holding both a personal and a business Chase Southwest card is permitted under Chase's card policies (subject to eligibility criteria). A personal card welcome bonus of 75,000 points plus a business card welcome bonus of 75,000 points = 150,000 total CPQPs — 15,000 above the Companion Pass threshold.

The timing consideration: welcome bonus points post after the spending threshold is met and a billing statement closes. To maximize Companion Pass duration, time the welcome bonus postings to occur in January of the target year. This may involve applying for one card in November and one in December, meeting both spending thresholds, and having both bonuses post in January. Welcome bonuses that post on January 5, for example, produce a Companion Pass valid through December 31 of the following year — approximately 24 months.

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*Multi-card strategy: Personal Chase Southwest card (75K+ bonus) + Business Chase Southwest card (75K+ bonus) = 150K+ CPQPs in one calendar year = Companion Pass with ~24 months validity if earned in January. Most efficient path to the Companion Pass for most cardholders.*

### A-LIST AND A-LIST PREFERRED: STATUS AS A COMPANION PASS EARNING ACCELERATOR

Southwest Rapid Rewards A-List status (earned by taking 25 qualifying one-way flights or 35,000 qualifying points in a calendar year) provides a 25% bonus on base flight points earned on Southwest flights. A-List Preferred status (earned by 50 qualifying one-way flights or 70,000 qualifying points) provides a 100% bonus — doubling the base flight points on every Southwest flight.

The CPQP acceleration effect for A-List Preferred members: if a typical Southwest one-way flight earns 1,200 base CPQPs, an A-List Preferred member earns 2,400 CPQPs on that same flight. Reaching 135,000 CPQPs from flights alone requires:

135,000 ÷ 2,400 = approximately 56 one-way flights at A-List Preferred earning rates. For a Southwest flyer who takes 100+ one-way flights per year (a realistic number for some business travelers), A-List Preferred status alone enables Companion Pass re-earning from flight activity each year without credit card welcome bonus dependency.

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*A-List Preferred CPQP earning: 2x base flight points. At typical earning rates, ~56 one-way flights at A-List Preferred rates = 135,000 CPQPs (threshold from flights alone). For high-frequency Southwest business travelers, A-List Preferred makes the Companion Pass re-earnable from flights without credit card bonus dependency.*

**COMPANION PASS AND THE SOUTHWEST ECOSYSTEM: NO-CHANGE-FEE, TRAVEL FUNDS, AND BOOKING FLEXIBILITY**

Southwest's no-change-fee policy — unlike American, Delta, United, and Alaska, which charge change fees on many fare classes — makes the Companion Pass particularly practical for travelers with variable schedules. When you change your Southwest flight, the companion booking can be updated to match without paying a change fee. This flexibility is especially valuable for the Companion Pass, because both the primary booking and the companion booking are affected by any flight change.

When a Southwest booking is cancelled — whether a paid fare or a Rapid Rewards award booking — any Travel Funds from the cancellation go back to the original purchaser's account. For paid fare bookings, the funds become Travel Funds in the primary cardholder's Southwest account. For companion bookings, the $5.60/flight taxes paid for the companion go back to the original payment method used for the companion's taxes. Southwest Travel Funds apply to future Southwest bookings but do not apply toward the Companion Pass itself — the Companion Pass is earned through CPQPs, not through Travel Funds.

This cancellation and rebooking flexibility — combined with the unlimited companion model — means the Companion Pass companion benefit effectively has no wasted annual use problem. Unlike an annual certificate that might expire unused if no qualifying trip is taken, the Companion Pass generates value on every Southwest flight taken. A month of heavy Southwest travel produces proportionally more companion value; a quiet month has lower companion value. The benefit naturally calibrates to travel frequency.

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*Companion Pass and Southwest's no-change-fee policy: both primary and companion bookings can be changed or cancelled without fees. Travel Funds from cancellations go to*

*the original purchaser. Companion portion taxes refund to payment method used. No wasted annual use problem — pass generates value proportional to Southwest flying frequency.*

## COMPANION PASS FOR FAMILIES: PRACTICAL APPLICATION

For families who regularly fly Southwest together — parents and children — the Companion Pass provides an annual framework for companion travel that can be structured around specific family travel patterns. The companion must be registered as a specific person in the Rapid Rewards account — and can be changed up to three times per calendar year.

A family of four with one Companion Pass holder can use the pass to cover one companion on every Southwest flight. The remaining family members (beyond the companion) pay regular Southwest fares. For families where one adult frequently travels with one specific family member (a spouse, a teenager who is the primary travel companion), the Companion Pass is a straightforward benefit. For families that travel as a group of three or more adults, the companion benefit covers one person — the others pay regular fares.

The three-change mechanism allows seasonal flexibility for family Companion Pass use. A family might register the spouse as companion for most of the year, change to a college student child for a summer trip, and change back — using two of the three annual changes. For Southwest family travel management, call +1(888)217-6744 for companion registration and booking assistance.

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*Family Companion Pass use: companion registered as one specific person per period. Three annual changes allow seasonal flexibility — register spouse year-round; change to college student for summer break trip; change back. Two changes used; one remaining. Pass holder + companion fly every Southwest trip together.*

## SOUTHWEST RAPID REWARDS ECOSYSTEM: POINTS, TRAVEL FUNDS, AND COMPANION PASS INTEGRATION

The Southwest Rapid Rewards ecosystem has three distinct value pools that interact with the Companion Pass in different ways. Rapid Rewards points — earned through flights, Chase Southwest card spending, and Rapid Rewards partners — are the primary currency for award bookings. When combined with the Companion Pass, Rapid Rewards points pay for the primary ticket while the Companion Pass covers the companion for

only $5.60/flight in taxes, halving the points cost of paired travel.

Southwest Travel Funds — created when a paid Southwest booking is cancelled — can be applied to future Southwest bookings. Travel Funds are associated with the original purchaser's Southwest account (or the passenger they were purchased for). For companion bookings under the Companion Pass, the $5.60/flight companion taxes, if refunded after cancellation, go back to the original payment method rather than becoming Travel Funds. Travel Funds from the primary ticket cancellation go to the primary traveler's account and can be redeemed for future Southwest bookings.

The practical integration: Companion Pass holders who frequently cancel and rebook Southwest flights (a common practice given Southwest's no-change-fee policy) may accumulate Travel Funds from cancelled paid fare bookings. These Travel Funds can be applied toward future primary Southwest ticket purchases, reducing the cash cost of future bookings — which in turn the Companion Pass covers for the companion at $5.60/flight. This ecosystem of points, Travel Funds, and Companion Pass creates a comprehensive framework for minimizing cash outlay on Southwest travel for regular flyers. Call +1(888)217-6744 for Companion Pass booking and Rapid Rewards account questions.

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*Rapid Rewards ecosystem integration: Rapid Rewards points pay for primary ticket (award booking) + Companion Pass covers companion at $5.60/flight = most cash-efficient paired Southwest travel. Travel Funds from cancelled paid bookings can offset future primary ticket costs. Three value pools work together for regular Southwest Companion Pass holders.*

## RE-EARNING THE COMPANION PASS ANNUALLY: THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY

- Track CPQP balance in Rapid Rewards account through the calendar year — visible in account dashboard
- In Q4, assess remaining CPQPs needed; plan credit card spending and flights to cross 135,000 before December 31
- For annual re-earning: maintain Chase Southwest credit card spending throughout the year to accumulate CPQPs continuously
- A-List Preferred members: 2x flight CPQP earning means flights contribute significantly to annual re-earning
- Welcome bonus strategy is one-time per card — once the bonus is earned, ongoing spending and flights drive re-earning

- Consider the annual fee structure of Chase Southwest cards relative to Companion Pass re-earning value
- Set a January 1 start target for each new calendar year's CPQP accumulation to maximize pass duration
- Call +1(855)321-3507 for Rapid Rewards account and CPQP balance questions

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*Annual re-earning strategy: track CPQP balance throughout year; top up in Q4 if needed with increased Southwest spending; A-List Preferred members earn faster from flights; ongoing card spending + flights sustain the 135,000 threshold for continuous Companion Pass coverage across multiple years.*

### Southwest Companion Pass — Quick Reference

| Scenario | Strategy | Value |
|---|---|---|
| Earn Companion Pass fast | Personal + Business Chase SW card welcome bonuses | ~150K CPQPs in Jan; valid ~24 months |
| Paid fare companion booking | Add companion after booking; pays $5.60/one-way | Full fare savings per trip |
| Award booking + companion | Redeem points for your ticket; companion pays $11.20 | Halves points cost of paired round trip |
| Companion change for one trip | Change in Rapid Rewards; take trip; change back (2 changes) | Max 3 changes/year — plan strategically |
| Re-earn for next year | Track CPQPs; cross 135K before Dec 31 | Sustained coverage: ongoing card + flights |
| International Mexico/Caribbean | Companion pays international taxes — confirm at +1(888)217-6744 | Higher than $5.60 but still discounted |

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Is the Southwest Companion Pass really better than all other U.S. airline companion programs?

It depends on flying patterns. For regular Southwest flyers who take the same companion on 5+ round trips per year, the Companion Pass is clearly superior in total

companion savings — no annual certificate can match unlimited companion travel over 24 months. For travelers who fly Southwest only once or twice a year with a companion, a high-fare competitor certificate (like the AAdvantage companion certificate on a $700 JFK-to-LAX route) may produce more total savings in a single year. The Companion Pass advantage grows with Southwest flight frequency.

**How do I start working toward the Southwest Companion Pass if I don't currently fly Southwest?**

The most practical starting point for non-Southwest flyers is a Chase Southwest Rapid Rewards credit card application. The welcome bonus points count as CPQPs and can cover 55%+ of the 135,000 threshold without flying Southwest. Adding a second Chase Southwest business card (where eligible) can cover the remaining threshold. Once the Companion Pass is earned, the companion benefit is available on all Southwest flights from that point — making Southwest flights more attractive to fly because the companion benefit is now in place. Call +1(888)217-6744 for Southwest and Companion Pass information.

**Can I use someone else's Southwest Companion Pass as a companion on their flights?**

Yes — if you are registered as that person's designated companion in their Rapid Rewards account, you can fly as their Companion Pass companion on any Southwest flight they book. The benefit flows from the pass holder to the designated companion, not the other way around. Each Rapid Rewards member holds their own Companion Pass (if earned); each designates their own companion.

**How does the Companion Pass interact with Southwest group bookings?**

Group bookings on Southwest (10+ passengers) are handled through Southwest's Groups department rather than standard individual booking channels. Whether the Companion Pass can be applied to a group booking depends on Southwest's group booking policies. For individual bookings within a larger group travel plan, the Companion Pass applies normally. Call +1(888)217-6744 to discuss Companion Pass application on group travel scenarios.

**What's the minimum number of Southwest round trips needed to justify earning the Companion Pass?**

The break-even calculation: the Companion Pass earns back the effort of reaching 135,000 CPQPs on the second or third qualifying Southwest round trip with a companion. If the average Southwest round trip fare is $150 and the companion pays $11.20 in taxes instead of $150, the savings per round trip are approximately $138.80.

Over 3 round trips: $416.40 in companion savings. For most cardholders pursuing the Companion Pass through credit card welcome bonuses (rather than purely from flying), the calculation also includes the card's annual fee relative to the value of points earned alongside the Companion Pass.

**Does the Companion Pass companion earn Rapid Rewards points on their flights?**

Yes. The Companion Pass companion earns Rapid Rewards points on each flight, based on the taxes paid ($5.60/one-way domestic) and their own Rapid Rewards membership status. The points earned on $5.60 are minimal, but the companion is enrolled in Rapid Rewards and accumulates points from all their own Southwest flights and card spending — the Companion Pass flights contribute incrementally to their balance.

**Can I book the companion on flights from a Southwest airport I've never flown from?**

Yes. The Companion Pass applies to any Southwest flight you book — there's no requirement to have previously flown from the departure airport. You book your own Southwest ticket on any available route, then add the registered companion. The companion benefit is tied to the booking, not the airport. Call +1(888)217-6744 for assistance booking the companion on any Southwest route.

**What if my Chase Southwest credit card welcome bonus is delayed and posts after December 31?**

If a welcome bonus posts after December 31, it counts toward the new calendar year's CPQP total, not the prior year. This is why timing the welcome bonus posting carefully — by meeting the spending threshold in time for the bonus to post before December 31 — is important if you're trying to cross the 135,000 threshold in the current calendar year. If there's a delay risk, contact Chase or Southwest at +1(855)321-3507 to understand the posting timeline before making year-end spending plans.

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The Southwest Companion Pass — the most powerful companion travel benefit in U.S. domestic aviation — earns its reputation through the unlimited companion model that scales directly with Southwest flight frequency, providing far more total companion value than any annual certificate program for regular Southwest flyers. The multi-card Chase Southwest welcome bonus strategy for efficient 135,000 CPQP threshold crossing, the January earning target for maximum 24-month validity, the three-companion-change annual flexibility for varied travel situations, and the Companion Pass's doubling effect on Rapid Rewards award redemption value collectively create an exceptional annual

benefit for anyone who regularly flies Southwest. For Companion Pass earning status, registration, and booking assistance, call +1(888)217-6744.

*Information current as of August 2026. Southwest Airlines Companion Pass terms may change. Verify current earning requirements and companion registration at southwest.com or by calling Southwest directly.*